



United Nations Environment Programme

برنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة • 联合国环境规划署
PROGRAMME DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT • PROGRAMA DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS PARA EL MEDIO AMBIENTE
ПРОГРАММА ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ ОБЪЕДИНЕННЫХ НАЦИЙ ПО ОКРУЖАЮЩЕЙ СРЕДЕ

GPA - The Hague, Coordination Office of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities

Information note on the non-binding character of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities

The GPA is a global voluntary agreement and, as such, is not binding.

It is a global comprehensive programme to assist countries and other partners to prevent the degradation of the coastal and marine environments from land-based activities. It is designed to assist States in taking action individually or jointly within their respective policies, priorities and resources, which will lead to the prevention, reduction, control and/or elimination of the degradation of the marine environment, as well as to its recovery from the impacts of land-based activities.

The Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities was adopted at an Intergovernmental Conference, held in Washington DC from 23rd October to 3rd November 1995. The Conference adopted the GPA on 3rd November on the basis of the draft GPA, as amended by the working groups held during the Conference. The Conference was attended by representatives of 108 countries and the European Commission. Observers of 29 non-governmental organisations were also present.

As with all Global Action Programmes, the formal adoption of the GPA by the Intergovernmental Conference does not constitute a binding character to the GPA. In this regard, Global Action Programmes, including the GPA, are different from Conventions. Conventions have a legally binding character and need to be ratified by countries after they have been signed. After the required number of ratifications a Convention becomes binding.

The GPA is not a Convention and thus has not been - and does not need to be - signed and ratified by countries. It is a voluntary, non-binding agreement.

Nevertheless, a number of actions have arisen from the GPA that are binding in nature. These include the signing of the POP's Convention and the Aruba Protocol on Land-based sources of pollution, to the Cartagena Convention.

The following excerpts from the Washington Declaration, adopted on the 3rd of November 1995, clearly state the non-binding character of the GPA, as well the non-binding commitments made by governments at the Washington Conference.

“The representatives of Governments and the European Commission participating in the Conference held in Washington from 23rd October to 2nd November 1995,

Having therefore adopted the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from the impacts of Land-based Activities,

Hereby declare their commitment to protect and preserve the marine environment from the impacts of land-based activities and

Declare their intention to do so by:

1. Setting as their common goal sustained and effective action to deal with all land-based impacts upon the marine environment;
2. Developing or reviewing national action programmes within a few years on the basis of national priorities and strategies;
3. Taking forward action to implement these programmes in accordance with national capacities and priorities;
4. Cooperating on a regional basis to coordinate efforts for maximum efficiency and to facilitate action at the national level;
5. Encouraging cooperative and collaborative action and partnerships, among government institutions and organisations, communities, the private sector and non-governmental organisations which have relevant responsibilities and/or experience;
6. Encouraging and/or making available external financing, given that funding from domestic sources and mechanisms for the implementation of the Global Programme of Action by countries in need of assistance may be insufficient.
7. Urging national and international institutions and the private sector, bilateral donors and multilateral funding agencies to accord priority to projects within national and regional programmes to implement the Global Programme of Action and encouraging the Global Environment Facility to support these projects.

The GPA Coordination Office hopes that the above information is useful.